

HALLMARKS 2009



poetry • fiction • essay • song



Hallmarks 2009



Literature, Art, and Song

from the Upper School student body of

The Harpeth Hall School

3801 Hobbs Road • Nashville, TN 37215

www.harpethhall.org

cover art by Angela Park

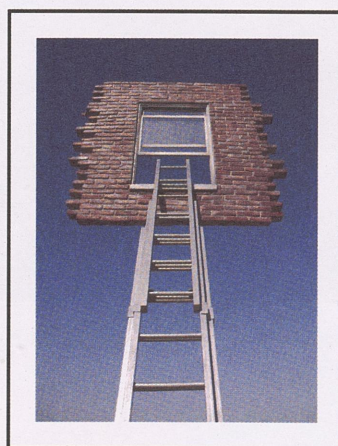
title art (above) by Ashley Hayden

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photograph by Liz Fletcher

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Words

Breached in Ecstasy



artwork by Maddie Polk

“

Quotation Marks

”

Ω

By Kalen McNamara

“A pain remorseless sweet” lurched and hovered on the page.
(I would sit at a student’s desk, banging gavels, feeling sage ...

With every book came another quote

I’d copy down with purpose—

Quips, phrases, epiphanies of love;

Unswerving words I would lay down as lines and never cross;

Platitudes with attitude.)

Seventeen and eleven twelfths is a mixed number, a hybrid age.

I like the quotes I’ve gathered so far,

but my collection’s weak in places;

Quotation marks don’t ignite the sparks

To cook my longing or my rage.

So both sit raw and bitter in the cauldron of my mind,

And when I try to ruminate, I keep choking on the rind.

Until today—I found this line,

this saucy thing I savor:

A chutney for the angst with cayenne pepper heat.

Why, sure, I’d like to read about “a pain remorseless sweet”;

Concoct remorseless morsels that leave the chef replete.

Recipes for relish,

some quotes have curing powers

translating sepia bedroom scenes

into something more concrete.

Goodwill Hunting

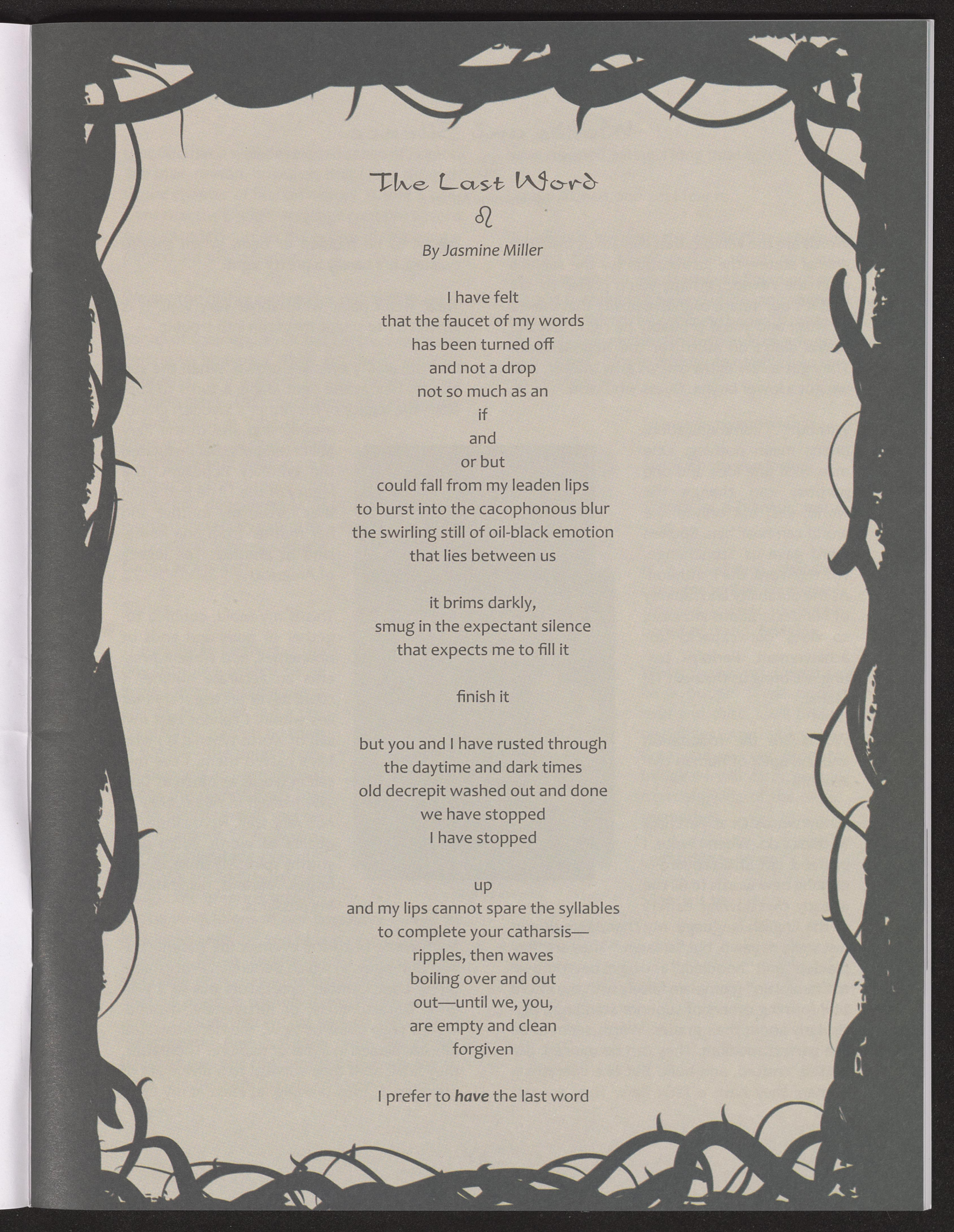
Ω

By Arianna Burkhardt

Goodwill Arianna
Is what her note says,
And I wonder at the meaning.
Is this a peace treaty,
An offering up of goodwill
In place of further hostility?
Or is this a request
For goodwill t'wards her
From me?
I think,
To be honest,
She means for me to shop,
Though all three are noble suggestions.



artwork by Caroline Green



The Last Word

Ω

By Jasmine Miller

I have felt
that the faucet of my words
has been turned off
and not a drop
not so much as an
if
and
or but
could fall from my leaden lips
to burst into the cacophonous blur
the swirling still of oil-black emotion
that lies between us

it brims darkly,
smug in the expectant silence
that expects me to fill it

finish it

but you and I have rusted through
the daytime and dark times
old decrepit washed out and done
we have stopped
I have stopped

up
and my lips cannot spare the syllables
to complete your catharsis—
ripples, then waves
boiling over and out
out—until we, you,
are empty and clean
forgiven

I prefer to *have* the last word

Words and Silence



By Jasmine Miller

Words are the vehicles that elevate us from the animal state—the justification for the *sapiens* after the *homo*. Perhaps you'd prefer to say that it's our innate cognitive ability that makes us wise, and you'd probably be right, but big brains didn't do much for the Neanderthals. They got a few extra cm³ of gray matter, and we got a lower larynx. Guess who won.

Without communication, brains mean nothing. One man with one idea and one purpose can change the world, yes, but only if the world can hear him. Spoken word gave us Stonehenge, written word, the Pantheon. As the durability and rapidity of our declarations increase, so does our capacity for achievement. Perhaps texting will bring us the next Taj Mahal.

Words are the foundation and the apex of human civilization.

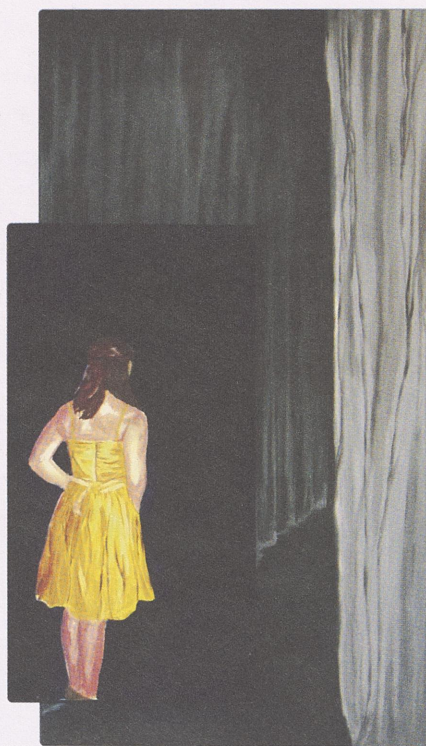
I know words. Or at least I like to think I do. When I write, I pretend I'm Shakespeare—minting new words to fill the already overflowing coffers of the English language. My characters do not just smile or yawn, but "smawn." They are "beplaided" and "hoodied," and have been known to "fauxplain" (complain falsely with the intent of informing others of superior standing), particularly about their grades. Words seem to be the perfect medium. They can be minced, dissected, crafted, and built. But like everything human, they have a fatal flaw. They are not

meant to be molded or bent. When they're twisted, it's hardly a pretty sight.

Thus, I can paint with words very well. It is when I try to sculpt that I run into trouble.

I am small. My eyes are brown. When the sun hits my hair at the right angle, it turns to copper—the legacy of my father's Swedish grandmother and also of the fiery Miller tempers that instigated the Whiskey Rebellion. The legacy of the Little Red Book that forced my mother and her mother from one homeland to another. The legacy of America.

This is my mold, cobbled together of odds and ends of phonemes, and while it presents an accurate outline, it could never tell the story that lies within. I cannot cast myself of words when it is I who have casted them. I see myself in words as much as God saw himself in Adam, that is, not very well. No quantity or quality of words could give you my spirit. My smile, laugh, hopes, dreams, aspirations. My passions.



artwork by Ryllis Lyle

My favorite historical event is the Defenestration of Prague, in which Bohemian Protestants threw their Catholic oppressors out of a window. Unfortunately, or fortunately, depending on your point of view, the defenestrated officials landed in a pile of manure. Thereafter, they attributed their survival to a divine act of providence, thus proving, at least in my eyes,

that God has a well-developed sense of humor. The main reason, however, that I love this particular chapter of human history, is that it confirms that the English language contains a word solely used to convey the action of throwing a person out of a window.

We are too highly evolved for our own good.

For all of their opulence and civility, words still belong to humanity. They are tools, variable, imprecise, and subject to the shortcomings of their users. Their purpose is to categorize. If something is "the dog," then it is not "a dog," and it certainly isn't your grandmother's silver spoon. The clarity and definitiveness of words is incredibly useful for all practical purposes. But it comes at a price.

Silence.

The ability to be silent is the one attribute shared by all living things, whether plant, animal, or fungal. It is a unifying force. There is no harm in silence—the phrase *hurtful silence* is an oxymoron. It is not the silence itself that hurts, but the words said before it, after it, or the words we feel obligated to say during it. We are addicted to language; the greatest technological innovations of our time have served to fill silence with the voices and text characters of friends, family, and the media. We want only to bridge gaps, never realizing that we forge them as often as we seal them. Words are the empty calories that we eat and eat and eat but never satisfy. And so we eat more. But somehow, despite our constant feasting, we are always hungry. I am hungry. If I wasn't, I would

have stopped eating a long time ago.

I crave silence, and yet I fear it.

But silence is worth the trepidation. There is nothing more precious than those rare moments, when the words have all flown out and there is nothing left to say, or do, and there is only to be. When the concrete beneath my feet has fled, and my breath suspends me, if only for a second, before letting me tumble into the next unknown.

Silence between friends.

Silence between lovers.

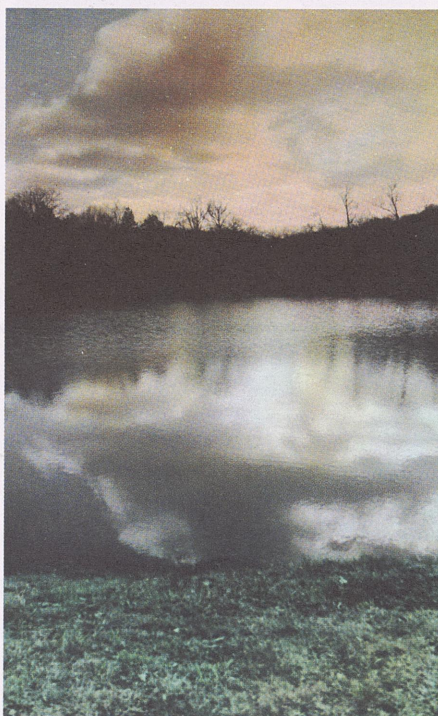
Silence as a blanket, not a void.

It is in silence that we can recognize humanity, stripped down to the barest bones of being. Bridging.

When I grow up, I want to be a bridge. I will bridge race and class. I will bridge disciplines. And when that time comes—my time to bridge—I will carry people from one side of the world to another.

I will bridge silence.

Silence is the bridge.



artwork by M.E. Sorci

Social Comment

The Door You ... Opened



artwork by Arianna Burkhardt

True Story



By Meredith Was

We are standing in the security line
at Dulles International Airport.
A big group of girls on a school trip.

The Asian man in front of us
gets pulled aside for inspection,
because he doesn't understand the security guard's directions.

One of my companions asks
"Why would you visit a country where you don't know the language?
He is slowing down the line!"

We are on our way home from Italy.

Week One



By Asia Brown

Yes, I could taste it, bitter and pungent. I could barely swallow past the scorching disappointment or worse yet, fear. It was there, in the junior lobby looking upon the sea of off white eggshell lockers that I realized I had just made one of the most momentous decisions of my life. Maybe it was the stark whiteness of the freshly ironed blouse against my brown skin or the bobbing blond ponytails that seemed to sashay in mid air that forced me to realize I didn't belong. Or maybe it was the smell of my flesh which seemed to burn with its own spicy essence that even I could sense deeply contrasted with their own.

In the end, it didn't matter. Not the hot cotton of my blouse, scratchiness of my socks, or inscrutably clean shoes could save me from the reality. I was taking a step, a risk. I was not walking across the carpet that rasped against my shoes at that moment; I was plunging head first into a pool of such biting cold that my body would immediately be encased in ice upon contact. Was that dread causing my heart to pound ferociously? Was that terror torturing me with the taste of my own coppery fired blood on the tip of my tongue? I pressed my blistering palm to my chest trying to still the urgency of my heart. I could not. Never had I been so aware of the rich color that embraced my hand, the greenish veins and reddened knuckles.

It was so beautiful, so absolutely horrid because I recognized it would not benefit me here. My legs, aquiver, my mind, racing ten places at once, not like mice scuttling for cheese, but rather like bulls rampaging the West. I tried to form a coherent thought. Roughly, I clutched the crumpled skirt, gulped down more acidic bile. My sensitive eyes, blinded by light magnified by my glasses, made a tentative blink. Emptiness, insecurity, they engulfed me in their pitying depths. Yet, I could hear them, calling me back. Saying things in a voice so much more shrill, light, and floaty than my own, they entered me. I thought, "Lie, all you have to do is lie."

I felt my skin stretching, retracting upon under used muscles, tense and fake. I smiled. And then I heard it piercing everything but my impenetrable façade.

"How do you like it so far?"

My lips, aching with the effort and filling with their poison, opened.

"I love it," I said.

My heart settled with the false admission. The residue of poison lingered in my throat all week, and it was only the second day of school.



Nice



By Ellen Thomas

He is a nice boy
I perceive parents mouthing
Behind a barrier of white flashes.
I glance back for closer inspection
Of his niceties:
Soft brown eyes and soft brown hair
(They come as a pair)
You dance with no reserve
You push in my chair
You compliment my dress
In two different languages.
Quel garçon sympathique!
Your coat fits your shoulders well.
Hey, that's a nice tie, too.
Nice like you.

Hiding behind their cameras
They say, *he is a nice boy*.
I see through my own lens.

artwork by Jane Marie Brown



100 mg



By Grace Tipps

Before, the searing brine rolled
easily and often.
Grotesque jewels glinted
and fell warm on your lap.

But now you've joined the ranks,
bubble wrapped and poised.
Sterile discs on your tongue
Blunt the scimitar of life

This is Progress. This is how it goes.

Sensual Seduction

(A Found Poem)



By Katie B. Holbrook

This is why I'm hot:
The way I live,
We fly high
I got money
Rubberband man
Pop bottles
Ridin' rims
Thug till ya death day.
Betcha can't do it like me
Step yo game up
Show u how.

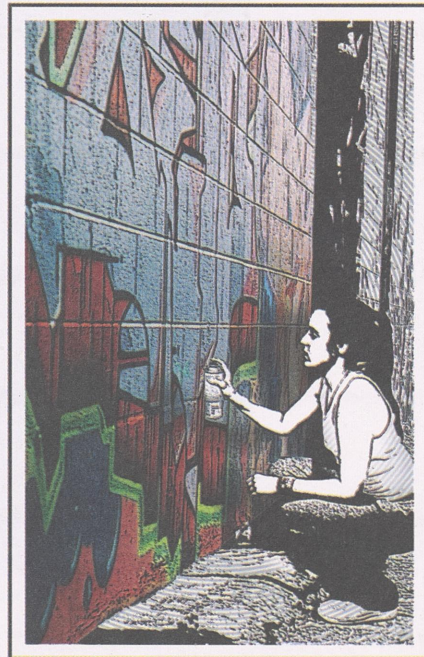
A bay bay:
B— get in my car,
Buy u a drank.
Sippin' on some sizurp
Get some crunk in yo system.
Drop it like it's hot
Freaky gurl
Get it poppin'
I know you want me.
Let the beat build
A little lower now
Pop, lock & drop it,
Miss New Booty.

If you like it I love it:
Whistle while you twerk
What's your fantasy?
U a freak (nasty girl)
Pull my hair
Rock yo hips
Down for whatever,
Whatever you like.

Oh I think they like me
Fresh AZIMIZ
Live your life
No problem.

EDITORIAL COMMENT

To create the "found poem" at left, the author selected titles of rap songs that have been popular in the past decade and strung them together to form a narrative. In commenting upon the poem, Holbrook wrote that while hip-hop may have catchy beats and music, the message is often disturbing. We agree. "Sensual Seduction" amounts to a sociological artifact about a contemporary scene in crisis. Like the author, we reject the hedonism and misogyny explicit in the titles. In fact, we print this piece as a cautionary remark about a popular art form that too often celebrates casual sex, drug use, and violence. So, "No problem"? Yes, problem. We don't believe it is wise—or even possible—to "have whatever you like."



artwork by Junie Welsh



Comments? Questions? Concerns?



By Mary Liza Hartong

When I buy a pair of shoelaces I always think
of how queer they are, how they stretch out too far.

I feel so cocky right then
because I'm sure, every time I'm so sure
that I've outsmarted the shoelace company.

I dream of that moment when I pick up the phone
armed with my

Comments? Questions? Concerns?
Some little man in China will answer
meekly, fiddling with the spiraling cord.
He will gasp as I profess my annoyance
at purple polka dot laces, which are too long.
Fingers would get tangled as spaghetti
just trying to untie these laces! I'd say,
"I am appalled at your ignorance!"

But I don't use words like "appalled."

And I never voice my
Comments? Questions? Concerns?
because it turns out shoelaces
are just the right length,
and I am no better
than some little man in China.

Utopia

Ω

By Channing Garber

This is utopia.

The sun is warm—neither hot nor cold
Time moves slowly and imprecisely,
counted in conversations—not seconds
The border between friends and family is
As hazy and imperceptible as that of
the waves that land upon the beach.
Borrowing and lending among friends
balances in a harmonious and endless cycle.

Doors never truly close,
There is never too little to be shared,
and appearance is overshadowed by true substance.

Still children are abandoned,
Left to sell mangos from plastic bags, along the highway.



artwork by Carly Rolfe

Existential Reflections

When the Words Run Together



artwork by Jane Marie Brown

Order



By Julia Sturgeon

Time is the warden of this fruitless prison

There lives a friend in my closet
His name is ROYGBIV
They hang two finger widths apart
Every item has a spot
Hospital corners pressed and clean
From chaos to order in the closing of a door and shutting of the blinds

High Ω

By Jasmine Miller

What's so great about high?
Ascending
Coming closer to your god
Your maker
Of course the closer you get
(In seeming physical proximity, that is)
The more likely you are to die.

Clouds stuff themselves up your nose
You choke on light
And epiphanies break themselves on your head
As your heart no longer flutters,
But flaps
(Threatening to turn you
into one of the more ungainly migratory birds
the world has ever seen).

No

I'd much rather be low
Where the dust that stirs beneath my feet
Is kin to the dust in my veins.

Pug Sestina

(in prose)



By Mary Liza Hartong

As a bow-clad little girl I used to twirl through the rooms of my house, looking for my pug Quincy. I'd listen for the clacking of his claws on the floor. Crayons were my only hope of finding him. He'd sit still waiting, if I'd only feed them to him. He'd wait by the kitchen wall.

I always thought it funny how he sat there on the wall, as if it were so much safer than, say, the front rug or the twirling staircase. Maybe he liked how still the wall was, how it was always yellow, like him, like a little pug. All he ever wanted was a tasty crayon. He seemed to do more than wait sometimes. Sometimes I swear he'd listen.

Quincy would turn his hairy black face up and listen to me like no one else. Sitting by him on the wall we were the same height, equals. I loved him enough to feed him all my crayons, even the silver one that sparkled. When I cried he twirled around me as if to create a barrier. As if a pug could take away everything hard and make the world still.

As I grew his legs became stiller, and I could hear a faint whimper on his breath if I listened. As hard as it was to grow older as a human, I imagine for a pug it is much sadder. For your whole life, seeing only the wall and watching people twirl away whenever they chose. Holding every crayon.



artwork by Kendall Waddey

Quincy only ever wanted a crayon, or so I thought as a little girl. But in the still light of one afternoon I saw the twirl had left his tail and he no longer could listen he was so deaf. The wall was not where he sat, but the window. My dear old pug.

I opened the door for my pug, knowing he had lost his taste for crayons. As he ran through the wall of the fence and onto the street, I fell still and listened to the car meeting his fragile body, in one last twirl.

I should not have kept him so still, but let him twirl away from the wall, because a pug should be free. Not have to waste life listening for small crayons.

A Villanelle

Ω

By Ryllis Lyle

I can feel your kiss on my springtime skin
you return with promises, petals and leaves
you are the sun and new life begins

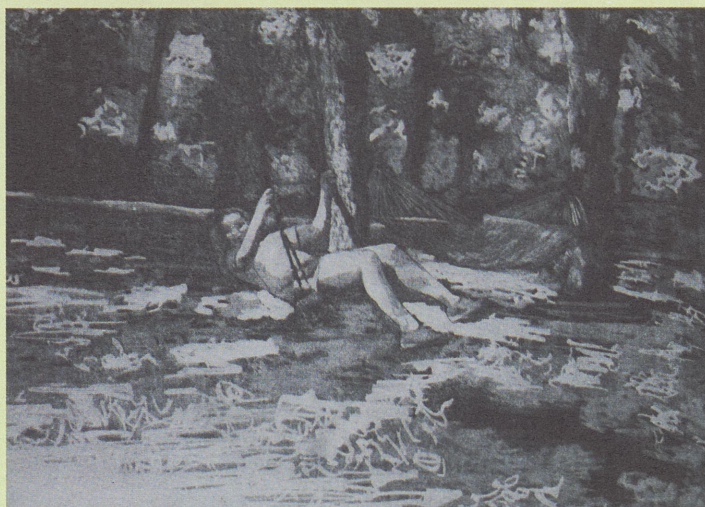
carried on the back of a warm summer wind
the sunflowers turn to meet your passing breeze
I can still feel your kiss on my springtime skin

the first leaf grows nervous on its branch, changing its own skin
your arms let go of me and retreat into long sleeves
when you are the sun new life begins

a chilly front shakes the leaves, they tremble again
and they tumble to the ground, falling to their knees
they want to feel your kiss on their springtime skin

I knew mother nature would surely win
she took you, and left me shameful nakedness of the trees
but I still have your kiss on my springtime skin

the days grow cold and dark and short and thin
a bird sings a song, perched on the eaves,
she sings of what was once your kiss on my springtime skin
you are not the sun and new life ends



artwork by Kendall Waddey

Airport Ω

By Sara Schott

It was a bit cold, a bit noisy, but other than that she was rather at ease. Her toes curled up inside the shoes as goose bumps developed underneath her oversized sweatshirt. It prickled against the fabric, and the fine hairs on her arm stood on end. In an uncharacteristic way, she sucked on an iced latte as though she were a fumbling child, her mouth half missing the straw and then drawing out liquid with puckered lips. She had almost forgotten where she was and why she was there. She had almost forgotten what thing she had set her mind on doing. But words boomed above her head, like the voice of God, reminding her of where she was, "Bob Daleur, please report to gate 43. Last call for flight 1566."

Her eyes popped open. Across from her, a couple sat in front of a windowed wall; its panes were so large she was afraid the slightest pinprick could cause them to shatter. On the other side of the glass, carts carried luggage across the expanse of pavement, painted arrows directed weaving shuttles, and men in orange asserted their importance to large aircrafts. Planes would come bursting into sight, freeing themselves from the earth and rapidly gaining height, followed by their gradual disappearance into the clouds. Just as one winged machine vanished from sight, another would take off, carrying more people to far-off places.

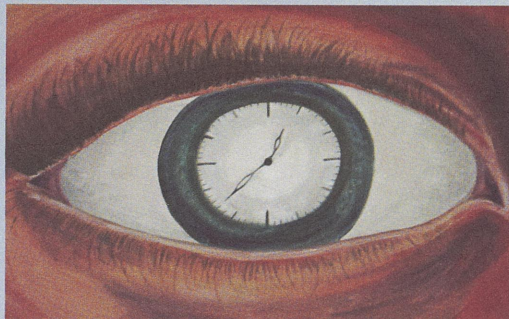
The couple discussed how much they loathed flying. A woman with large eyes excitedly asked her child what sound a cow makes. A group of friends on their way to a wedding scolded a newcomer for being late, and he reminded them that "some people have a real job." All these people would soon be bursting into the sky and flying to far-off places.

And so would she.

Beyond the couple, beyond the glass, beyond the expanse of busy pavement, and beyond an interstate abuzz with cars, the city mocked her. A city she thought lived only as another place on a long list of addresses. Why should one place be any more than another? Couldn't she be free to pick up her entire life and leave without regret? She never intended to settle in or make friends, let alone a best friend. Her worst fear had come true; this place was home now. Even separate from the faces she loved, the city, the places gave her a tugging feeling in her chest.

The woman with the large eyes and her child stood at the announcement that "Flight 3717 is now boarding at gate 35. Passengers with children or anyone needing extra time and assistance in boarding please board now."

She extracted a boarding pass from her purse and turned it over in her hands. She had to go. Right? It was wrong to love a place where she had no roots. It was wrong to love a place at all; it seemed inappropriate to love something that could not love her back. It was wrong to love people who were



artwork by Ashley Hayden

essentially strangers. Wasn't it? She had nothing in common with them except for this city where she didn't belong.

"Now boarding all passengers for flight 3717."

She was running away, or that was the gist of it. She was running away from the ties that she had so fervently tried to avoid. She was running to prove to herself that there was no such thing as permanence in this world. And even if there were, permanence is not what brings you happiness. Adventure brings you happiness. Exploration brings you happiness. Freedom brings you happiness. Permanence does not bring you happiness. Too bad she wasn't convinced.



artwork by Ashley Hayden

"Boarding all passengers for flight 3717. Please report to gate 35."

Behind the panes of glass stood monuments that were more than just structures. They were memories of a best friend stranger, brown eyes, and blindingly white smiles. It seemed so strange, so foreign, that a simple skyline could invoke so many memories and such a bubbling contentedness inside of her. Is this what people felt when they talked about a hometown?

"Last call for flight 3717."

She frowned out at the cityscape. All those images and the people and places she associat-

ed with them would live on. Even without her, brown eyes and white smiles would sit around a table with crafty intentions brewing. She hadn't intended to love this skyline, but she did. She hadn't intended to laugh and cry as she watched this city change, but she had. Would being a newcomer and a stranger be refreshing after this? Would she find the same pleasure in walking down the street and not recognizing a single face? She saw the faces she had come to recognize and how they each induced a different feeling within her. She saw landmarks and what memories that they inspired, what those memories meant. She loved this city. And the fact was, she knew it had to love her back.

She watched as an airplane pulled backwards right in front of her. The propellers spun like an overhead fan, sending a chill of air down her back. They gradually picked up speed until it was as if they were not there at all. The plane rolled away without consequence, reminding her of a little dog trotting down the street. It paused again for a moment, preparing. And then, just like all the others, it sped uncontrollably, breaking free from the pavement and lifting heavenwards. Against all odds, a smile stretched across her face as the plane disappeared into a cottony cloud.

A clear cup with latte-covered ice sat forgotten as she stood calmly, casually dropping the boarding pass that read flight 3717 into a trash can. This place was home now, after all.

While Playing Aufschwung



By Jasmine Miller

I sit. My thighs stick to the plastic of the piano bench and I lean forward, hands stiff, breath held in anticipation. A pause. And it begins.

The notes are like pencil jabs—little black dots on a page, then a wave. The hands relax, a graceful sweep of an octave. The cycle repeats again.

I'm thinking too hard, aren't I? I should be breathing now, but I can't. Not yet. Now the hard part, only it's not. It shouldn't be. Too many notes—they all sweep in the hand, but there are so many of them. The left hand just dodders along, but the right works so hard, a never-ending cascade of flounces. I close my eyes to get lost in the wave of crescendo. My hands sink into glassy, yet slightly sticky faux-ivory keys, and I can feel my reflection raising her eyebrows at me in the black mirror. The light above the piano is too bright, splashing on the retina like a sunspot. I think that the skin of the eyelids must be very thin, that the light can come through. Oops. Wrong note.

I'm looking at my hands again. It's reassuring, giving me a focus other than the airy notes above my head.

Back to the jabbing, only there's more of it this time. Lean into the note... forte. Different key... louder. Forceful octaves, yes—ouch. That wasn't quite right.

Oh, good. The easy part. Rock, sway, dig. All about finger impulses here, building suspense. Relax here, breathe in the smell of old paper and ink—dim echoes of Schumann's genius. Scales—I've practiced this. It better go well in the jury tomorrow, not like last time. The sour, dry taste of embarrassment lingers still on my tongue. Now surging arpeggios that build from my stomach—this part I can actually play.

Climax! Romantic music is so over the top, but I love it. But not as much as Debussy. I really should move that light—it's getting in my eyes again.

Recapitulation. Same notes, but different key. Took a page from Mozart, I guess. I hope it doesn't sound too muddy. Change the pedal more often, maybe? I don't know—sounds better on his piano. Are juries in his room or in Turner? I hope in his room—I like it better there.

I hope I do well tomorrow. My last jury went well, or at least they thought so. I thought it was mediocre, but I have high expectations. Music is never as good in retrospect, dotted with wrong notes and missed opportunities. So remember the fingering, better flexibility in the hand. I always mess up the left hand here.

Yup, I messed it up.

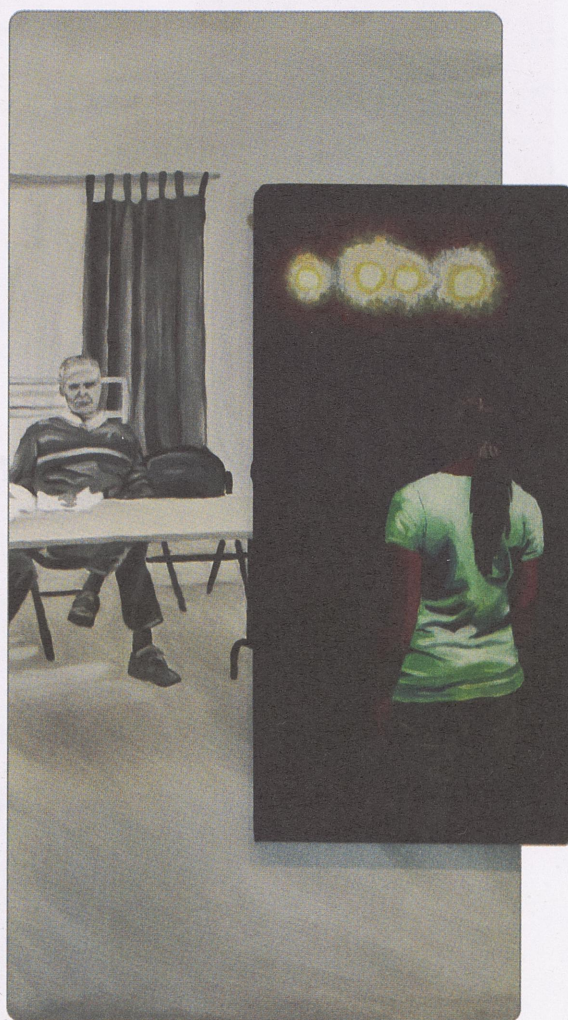
You can't really hear it though, and they probably won't be able to tell. They won't have the score.

Almost the end—homestretch. My arm kind of hurts from holding itself in hopes of perfection.
New fingering, yes. Good. Pedal, chord, pedal, chord. FIN!

Deep breath.

Not bad.

Let's do it again.



artwork by Ryllis Lyle

Coming of Age

Hissing Against the Happiness



artwork by Cassie Sanders

Sixteen



By Emily Tseng

World, I am disappointed.
I turned sixteen on a crisp cold cautious February day, and
I am the same me I was the crisp cold cautious February day before.

I expected greatness, World,
After all you told me.
Enlightenment, epiphany.
I thought I would finally come into my own,
That I would emerge with purpose, motivation, absolution,
Confident, bold, wise, aware--
I thought that I would speak up.
Life was supposed to begin in earnest, in full glory,
in splendor.

I am, sadly, rather unchanged.
I drive the same routes to school,
I worry the same worries.
I am still woefully silent at the worst of times.

Where is my promised epiphany?
Sixteen promised understanding,
Of you, World, and of myself.
Of love and grief and light and despair.
If anything, I am more confused and hopeless than before.
I wasn't asking for too much.
You didn't have to turn the sky red, World.
You just had to show me why it's blue.

World, I am disappointed.
All I have learned
from my rather limited sixteen years in this loud insistent world:
We all just want to hold close, and be held tight, and know.

Girl Between Times



By Jasmine Miller

Her smile is slow as molasses, and twice as sweet
stretching across her face like
fat cats on fence posts, and thick power lines
lancing light across harried highways to pool
in plains platitudes.

She lumbers gracefully,
her gait
as straight
as her talk.

Her eyes sleep under a hazy spread
not hazel,
but a greenly bluish fog of cigarette smoke over
fields of hard days' work
night whiskey on railroad tracks
kisses that brush words from her lips
that she didn't know were there.

Her smile is slow as molasses, but
twice
as sweet.



artwork by Eleanor Ezell

When I Went to Get My Job Back



By Kaity Krupp

Today, when I went to get my job back,
Green-eyed Lucy, who'd always liked my bike,
Showed me hers, the English Lady.

Today, when I went to get my job back,
Short Kath told me she saw my formal photos
And that him and I looked cute.

Today, when I went to get my job back,
Old Brian asked if I was in Harvard:
That's all right, you're still a genius to me.

Today, after I got my job back,
I remembered that Lucy had no money for college.
I remembered Kath's father committed suicide.
I remembered Brian was addicted to cocaine.

My kind friends deserve a raise for their strength.

It's Funny



By Angela Park

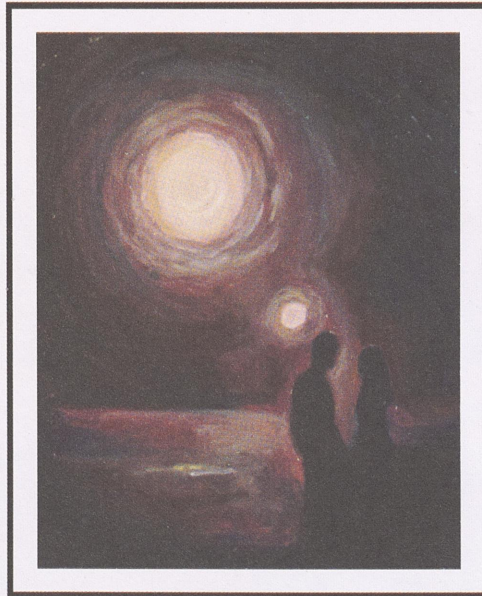
It's funny how you say you're not
When you clearly are
When you say you'd listen
And the moment you hear the
first word you blow
Up
You know what I think
You're scared
Scared of truth seeping in
Seeping in to ruin your fun
the fun that will lead you to your
Ruin.

him: and me and you

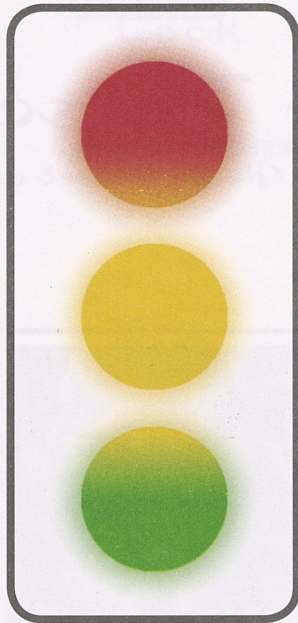
Ω

By Noel Price

If I could find the words to say
the feelings running through my mind
I wouldn't, so therefore I'll stray
from there for you'll feel left behind.
My manner's changed, that much is clear
Disdain, confusion in my core.
But all's the same with you, my dear;
your gazes, kisses I ignore.
You ask me why; I lie, I lie.
It's nothing, stress, too much, too soon...
Do you reject my alibi?
As unforgiving as that Moon
Who saw us, full of life and thrill
And knows my thoughts are with him still.



artwork by Kalen McNamara



The Light Ω

By Emily Hong

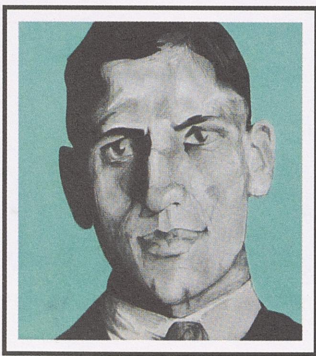
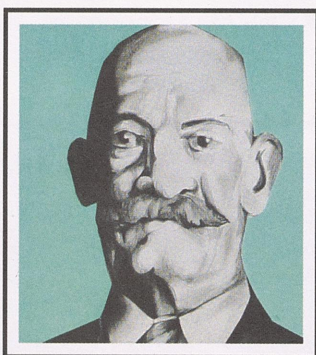
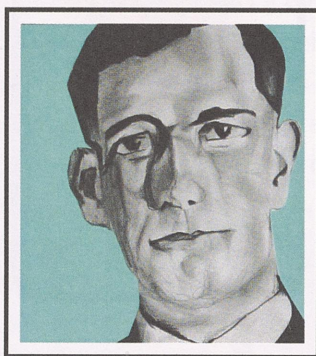
Green turning yellow,
I see the three-tiered flash
And I speed up to catch the light
But midway, I feel a wave of conscience
As if telling me to instead wait
Or to tell me
That I'm speeding not only on the road,
But in life,
Harried to get to my goals—
Risking life
To catch a light.

But before I can pause
I've passed it,
And it's gone.

section 5

Outsized Personalities

I Would Have Gladly Passed on the Throne



artwork by Jane Marie Brown

Look

o

By Madeline Wiseman

There's nothing like
Lookin' good.
Not in a dress
Or high heels,
But in an outfit carefully planned
So as to seem unplanned.

You get the look.
The second look,
A longer look.
There's nothing like
That look.

You feel powerful.
You are powerful.

You're the one who smiles
Or doesn't.
You're the one who gives
Him the confidence
To start a conversation.

The satisfaction
Is unmatched.

You smile silently
As you go,
Wondering how
Something so simple
As a look
Can make
The difference.

6th Day

Ω

By Jasmine Miller

He did not create her to be beautiful
porcelain,
did not paint her veins delicate—blue fish bones on a platter.

But molded her from rough clay and spittle,
an earthen vessel to fill with
—heavenly—
spirits.



Man

Ω

By Asia Brown

Of all the dreams had
there was one
where fertility reigned and
futility kneeled and
Adam met Eve over and over.

artwork by Aline Dushimire

To Adam:

Ω

By Jasmine Miller

I was made from your side to be by your side.
You named me before I could even decide
who
I
was
.

the sound of your lips against air
tongue against teeth
your words that weighed my world down—

You flung your syllables upon me, ponderous and proud,
until the next bird—next flower.

I loved you more often than not.
You were good to me,
and your body was warm.
but when You held me
You held me down.
You filled me
before I was empty.
You covered my mouth
with your kisses
and swallowed my words.

You walked alone.

well, so did I.

I was the first to know, will be the first to go,
Alone, at last, in this heaven You thought hell.
this poison drips from my lips, to my hips—
invincible, untouchable
unspeakable—
my name.

I met eternity; my gift to posterity
is that they'll never know it.

how
do
You
like
them
apples
?

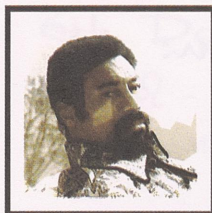


artwork by Anna Spoden

Wilt

Ω

By Asia Brown



I've glided on glazed wooden floors
before white hot flashing lights,
with blaring screams of Capitulation,
sweating flesh to flesh to harsh sounding
breaths, and leapt above the heads of men—
a veritable superman.

Ha. But even before that

I out-strode all my opponents,
out-threw the best:
a shot put no more than a child's
stone in my hands,
always the first to the finish line.

"Wilt the Stilt!"

"Goliath!" "The Big Dipper!" they'd cry
until I allowed them a morsel of my fame,
a scribbled name on a piece of paper—a picture
underneath my looming shoulders.

I'd given them the
best of my body: torn hamstrings,
eroded knee joints,
inflamed wrists—nothing much to a god like me.

I'd hopped from gleaming decks,
smeared with sweat, my hand propelling forward
ignoring the snarling opponent's mouths
as I blocked another ball
from going down the hoop. They would boo me,
but I had signed on with the understanding
that I would be ground into hash by the game,
or at least that's how it would feel.

I was destined forever to change faces,
sometimes penetrating the game, a purple
and yellow jersey chafing my back,
globetrotting in red,
or indulging my favorite move,
the kind I'm known for, that makes women weep
when I whisper,
"you're number 19,854"—
But I won't stop, and I know
they won't as
they weep from emptier places than their hearts.
7 ft 1, one of eleven children, Philly born.

I'd battled with an angry
pneumonia and almost lost,
and never would lose again.
So, I could never keep that
sleepy woman
who made me stutter as I had in childhood,
who made me less than almighty.

Because though I rarely slept
I'd wake to be breast to breast
with Bill Russell, bearing the
weight of Abdul-Jabbar's words,
cringing as I missed another free throw,
the boos and scorn not to be shared.
I was already a two timing MVP, breaking fingers
when I dunked, crushing toes as I landed.
I even ducked into the hall of fame. Good.
For there were times when
I woke to my heart seizing.
Ha. There was the Ferrari, the Bentley,
Ursa Major, and the paychecks.

7 ft 1 at 17 years old,
one of eleven children,
my libido as constant as gravity,
my limbs likened to eternity.
So when the fluid in my legs
kept building,
and when my heart, that useless organ,
continued to squeeze—I thought of all
the pick-up games,
the late nights on Mount Oread,
and teammates.
I remembered that I was too amazing to die,
a giant amongst mere men.
I had always been ready—
ready to jump, pivot,
block, score. Ready to kiss,
bruise, ready to play.
But my heart would stop, telling me it was over,
that I was not to have any more ...
fun and games.



Hitch

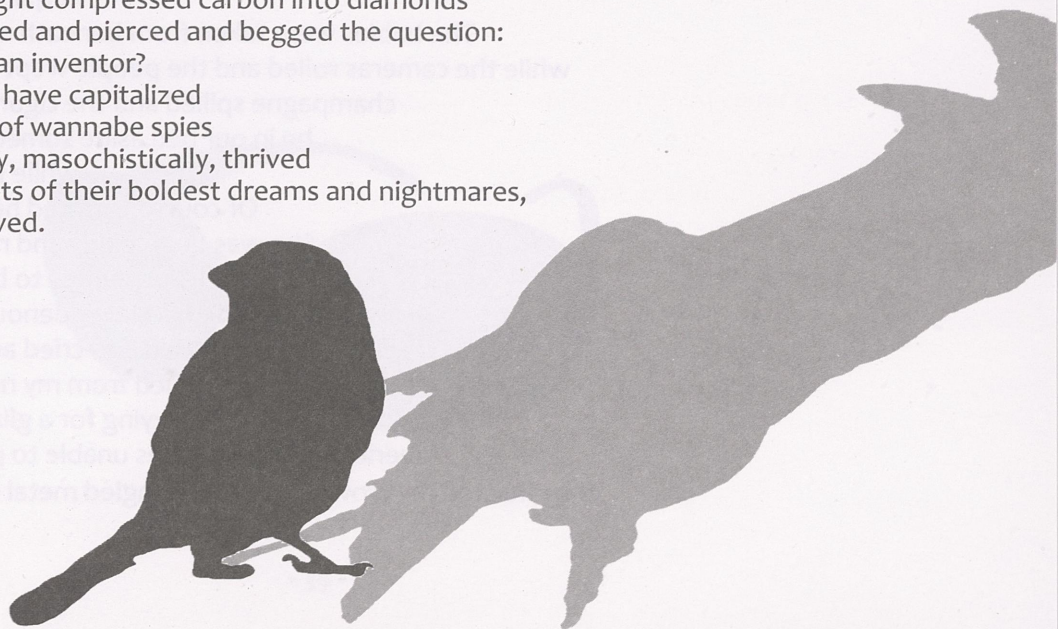
Ω

By Kalen McNamara

I was born Leytonstone bedrock,
Swaddled in shale with a kind of coal coziness.
Middle class, both average and mean,
Hands clammy when my father sent me to the sheriff with that letter:
"Lock him up for a spec; the boy's been bad and needs a fright."
It was the sort of thing that sticks with you, try as you might to shake it off.
Like Prufrock's brave big brother,
I harnessed the granite slabs of my own phobias
and pulverized them into sand,
tiny granules to caress the audience's filtering fingers,
our communal fears ground down into palatable parcels.
I carried these sandbags around my waist, tucked them within my suit;
Thus I cut a famous silhouette: a bit portly in ink-blue.

And I found among the audience
a hunger for these regurgitations of their own gutlessness,
delight in terror
and eyes wide, scanning the screen from side to side
for MacGuffins and symbols I'd hide.
They watched from skewed angles of my own calculation.
Blondes struck platinum by acting out my cold imagination.
Critics said I built the loom to weave together death and infatuation.
The long reel of my life was coiled tight around spools of suspense.

But I'll tell you, dear reader:
It gave me a mounting indigestion.
The glossy reels of my direction
left me reeling from the charge of perfection.
The sand's weight compressed carbon into diamonds
Which glimmered and pierced and begged the question:
Was I so much an inventor?
Or just lucky to have capitalized
On theater full of wannabe spies
Who sadistically, masochistically, thrived
On my snapshots of their boldest dreams and nightmares,
expertly contrived.



Grace

Ω

By Caroline Winsett



He asked me.
A glance, a nod and it was finished;
the death of my career was to be my
greatest performance.
The cameras were in ecstasy.
“Us” became fodder at the behest of page 6;
our health was toasted from the Riviera
to Paramount dressing rooms and on the
balconies of Park Avenue apartments.
Beneath the pelts and ropes of pearls,
they were relieved and I was encaged.
A golden band intended for my finger
seemed to slip around my ankles and I became:
a consort, a womb, his princess.
He took me for the sake of his people,
And after the second cigarette he’d lay like ice—
“that was nice, kid.”
In the morning I’d be with Frank, or Marlon, or Clark.
They asked me, too.
I took my white gloves off and laid down to rest.
He never mentioned Cap Ferrat and so we lived
as royals always do and always will:
everything hidden behind an Hermès bag.
They pulled the gold from my ankles,
melted it into a gag and poured it down
my throat.
It fit quite nicely.
The babies were taken from beneath my skirts
while the cameras rolled and the people wept and the
champagne spilled and the cigars lit and
he in our bed aside someone else
while I smiled.
Of course I pushed her hand.
She was quite giddy and nervous,
but I knew the road well and needed to breathe.
Hitch always insisted on a clever denouement.
She cried and cried and cried and cried
as the gold exploded from my neck into
hundreds of flashbulbs vying for a glimpse of
America’s princess. I was unable to pose, so
they hoisted my crown from the mangled metal instead.

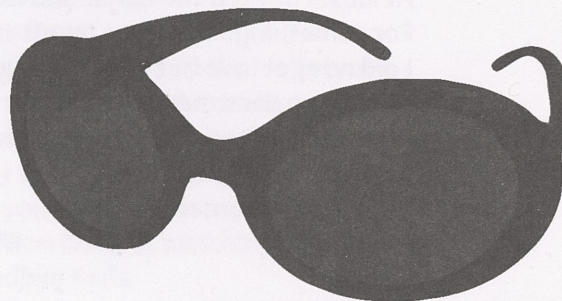


Jackie



By Sarah Schutt

So she stood, encased in a midnight, ethereal guise,
On her shoulders the burden of an ill-fated name,
Those wide-set, alien eyes
Immortalized in silk-screen, technicolor fame.
So she stood, never center but perched behind the presidential trench,
Shielding beneath larger-than-life glasses
A student of history versed in perfect French,
A lifetime of knowledge hidden to the masses.
So she stood, bravely, or blindly, ignoring her reality
Of nighttime visitors and an absent fidelity.
Trapped between image and person, her life a mocking duality
Never revealing itself; and in 1963, paying the penalty.



Di
Ω

By Elizabeth Floyd



Like my ancestress
I walked calmly to my guillotine,
But at least in her case
She knew what was coming.
Her blade came down smooth, fast, clean
Mine inched down through the years,
Leaving me terrified.
There I stood
Nervously
Waiting for the blow,
For the horror to end.
Here she goes again.
They roll their cold, cold eyes.
Wallowing in self-pity
Again.
You must admit I did get a rather raw deal.
No chance to say goodbye to my Harry and Wils.
It is still a shame to lose your life even if you never lived it.
I did have a few laughs
At the expense of the old Rottweiler
With her very British teeth
After a few martinis.
I guffawed and snorted the cold vodka
When I heard myself use words
Like hag
And sag.
And old bag.
It really was divine to be common.
To be common.
Common.
The English Rose cannot be common.
Apparently, Shy Di is too common.
Unintelligent. Overweight.
Blame it on that.
Go to your Rottweiler.
She'll beg at your feet.
At least I purged the caviar and lobster
For something.
I did not get love but I got vindication.
I got the palace; he got the villa.
I won the custody battle, I suppose.
I did get to keep the title—
Well, for the cameras
I smile.
I wave.
You cast me aside.

I loved so many things.
Wonderful things. Precious things.
Harry. Wils.
We danced, didn't we?
Oh, how I loved to dance.
But they hated me for it.
I wanted you to notice my long, elegant legs.
You noticed all right.
Oh, how I loved to swim.
But you hated me for it.
I wanted you to notice my strong, graceful legs.
You noticed all right.
One failure after another
Too hard to hold
To be perfect
You pulled me in,
Thinking I would be easy to mold
Then abandoned me, left me alone.
I grew up with abandonment
I thought I could handle.
But you said I smelled too much like vomit to attract.
I had lost control.
The English Rose was wilting.
My life became landmines,
Hidden,
But everywhere I stepped, something exploded.
Anything exploded
From flashing bulbs to new affairs
One landmine after another
So I fought.
Or so I tried
Knowing inside, I just wanted to hide
I ran, I drove
I drove right to the end,
When the clash of metal decided my fate
Twisting unnaturally under the weight of the car
My limbs mangled
I was thrust to the side
My guillotine had finally hit its mark.
The world stopped moving
Even for you, who hated me more than the icy queen.
They denied my importance
But you saw it there
2 million bowed, watching my coffin go.
Goodbye Paris.
Je t'aime.

the 2009 hallmarks CD

- 1 • "To Adam" by Jasmine Miller
- 2 • "Jump to the Moon" by Meredith Lawrence
- 3 • "I Will Show You" by Ife Kehinde
- 4 • "Midnight" by Ife Kehinde
- 5 • "Starlight Tonight" by Meredith Lawrence
- 6 • "Yellow Umbrella" by Jasmine Miller



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index of subtitles

Each section of this year's publication is given a title—from "Coming of Age" to "Social Comment" and so on. The subtitles in each section are drawn from lines of verse submitted to the magazine by the following authors:

"Breached in Ecstasy" from Willa Fitzgerald's "Flying Without Wings"

"The Door You Opened" from Cassie Sanders's "The Naked City"

"When The Words Run Together" from Ryllis Lyle's "List Poem"

"Hissing against the Happiness" from Abby Smith's
"They Will Not Let My Daughter Love"

"I Would Have Gladly Passed on the Throne" from Lexi Zager's
"I Can See The Colors in My Mind"

the 2009 hallmarks editors

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Jasmine Miller • Noel Price • Cassie Sanders • Rebecca Sanders • Katie Schull
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Noel Price

Mr. Joe Croker





Sun
♋

By Ryllis Lyle

I want to sink my teeth into your orange peel
Pick you with my hands
Slice apart your burning fruit
And swallow the white hot heat beneath my skin